

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success



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Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

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David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Mastermind community and the Dentist Freedom Blueprint podcast. I am so pleased today to have the opportunity. It's a real privilege for me to have a long time good friend, Mr. Brett Judd with us today. Brett, how are you doing sir?

Brett Judd: Doing great, David. It's great to be here. I appreciate that a lot.

David Phelps: I'll give a little bit of Brett's background in a minute, just so you have some context about the conversation we'll have today, but I have to lead first with Brett and I and his beautiful wife, Gina have known each other, gosh, it's probably going on eight, nine years. We met at a Mastermind group, which is a place where I meet some of the best people in the world. Masterminds are a well facilitated brand with great leaders, just bring the best of people. And we were in a group together for some time and we stayed friends. Your background, which I'm going to get to in a minute is so relevant to just business owners, entrepreneurs, everyday life. And I love having conversations with you because, well, let me just be clear.

I have a bias towards a certain belief system and I know the way we believe is very congruent. So I only bring people on that

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

believe what I believe. No I don't do that. But it's easy to have those kind of conversations. So anyway, let me give some background a little bit about Brett. Brett has a private practice, a profitable, ethical practice, but also building out a mastermind called the Apex Effect Mastermind. We're going to talk about the Apex Effect here today so you understand what that's about. Brett's a private practice leadership expert. He's the founder of Profitable Practice Blueprint coaching and the Apex Effect. Personal success, his programs transform practices into high production, low stress, collective mindset teams. He's a leadership and business relationship author. He's the author of Relationship Focused Business Success: Proven, Effective, and Profitable Principles to Leverage the Power of Positive Relationships.

He's a personal mindset and stress management expert and author and creator of Unlock your Millionaire Mind, and the Apex Effect personal success mindset, transformation programs designed to end the burnout causing stress and emotional distress to... There so prevalent in private practice today. He's a sought after speaker on the issues of leadership, how to balance life, business, and stress to end burnout causing chaos. Well, that's just the world we live in today, Brett, is it not? I mean, who you are... We live in a world today with immense amount of change going on. Personal lives, business lives. We have global political stresses today that one might say we haven't seen before. Maybe we have, and we just live an age today where everything seems like it's stressful, but we all have our stories, Brett.

I have shared our stories together of downturns and setbacks, from mess to success, we all have those and yet when you're dealing with it personally in your own life with maybe your spouse, your family, or it's your business, something's going on,

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

it feels like you're all alone, doesn't it? You feel like everybody else out there in the world, on Facebook is killing it, crushing it. What's wrong with me? I've worked hard, I passed the test, Brett, right? I'm ethical, I have integrity, and I provide the best service and product I can. And yet, doggonit, life just seems like it's beating me down. You deal with people and helping through this all the time. What words and wisdom could you give so we don't feel like we're so all alone when this is happening to us?

Brett Judd: One of the very first things in a situation like that, that I always tell people is just pull it back. You cannot base your own personal success and your own journey on what somebody else is putting out and purporting to be their trip. But we all know that when we come on in a situation like this, or when we get onto social media, or even to a point when we go to these Masterminds, especially in the beginning, we are the best version of ourselves that we think we want to be. We're not the truth. We aren't the one who's been in the grind, who's been dealing with it, who's burned out, who's tired. We don't want to present that. And so one of the very first things I always talk to people is, "look, you got to turn that off and come back." And they lose focus because now they start to compare to everything out here.

That's irrelevant. We're in our own race and in our own journey. And we have to use the benchmarks that are based on our journey, not somebody else's. And so one of the very first things we have to do is reign it back, turn off the noise, turn off the confusion and come back to what it is that you want. What is it that I desire? I always talk to people about it as this... When they start talking about their problems and their desires and their dreams, I say, "so what?" And they look at me like, "what are you talking about, 'so what?'" I'm like, "so what? Why is that so important to you? What is it about that, that you're so

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

stressed about it?" And then I really push with them this idea of what's your "so I can", because if you can't answer, "I want all of this so I can...", then you don't have a real dream, vision or purpose. And that's one of the first things we have to iron out.

David Phelps: So that's really getting down to clarity, right?

Brett Judd: Very much.

David Phelps: What am I doing, whatever it is, all this for? What am I building this business or this bigger business, or these multiple businesses or why am I doing this? Because that's where we lose sight and we do have this tendency, we all do, to compare ourselves to the outside world and, of course, the outside world only presents itself as everything's great. So now we have this measure of quote "success" that it's not realistic by any means. You never had to see behind the scenes, the issues, the baggage and the negative factors that go along with people who tend to do that. But we still, as humans, we're very big on comparing ourselves with other people's definition of success.

Brett Judd: Yeah. Their definition of success, somebody else's version. That Instagram life and that Instagram image is so prevalent right now and people are so confused by it and it's so false. Years ago, not too many years ago, my daughter was living in Italy and Gina, and I got a chance to go visit her and spend some time there. We were at the Trevi fountain and we're sitting there at this beautiful historic monument, gorgeous. And I'm watching all of these Instagram divas. And one of them actually rudely kicked us out of a spot where I was trying to take a picture of Gina, because we were interrupting her shoot. I'm like, "oh my gosh." It was so false, so fake and produced. I'm like, "wow". Yet that is what we are comparing ourselves and what we're beating ourselves down with. We've got to turn that off.

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

David Phelps: I've got a quote for you here. This is from a book that I reference often. I actually read it when I was very young, but this is one of Dr. Seuss quotes. So you'll love this one, Brett.

Brett Judd: All right.

David Phelps: "Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter won't mind." I think that's endless wisdom there, right? But yet we're all-

Brett Judd: Yeah, absolutely.

David Phelps: Yeah. So susceptible to caring what other people think about us, it's that groupthink mentality, be safe with the herd, right? Because if I do what everybody else is doing, if I think the way other people think then, well, no, one's going to judge me, right, because I'm just doing what everybody else is doing, but what's wrong... Again, you have vast experience not just obviously in your own life, but with helping many other people. That groupthink mentality, where does that leave people? If they just tend to say, "well, I'll be safe and I'll just follow what everybody else is saying and doing, and living my life this way." What's wrong? Where does that take people?

Brett Judd: Well, it takes a place that I know you have talked about a lot and you know very well and have seen. It leaves a place of stagnation and frustration. There's a very subtle shift that happens to somebody when they move out of that desire to speak what they feel, to say how they feel and not worry about what somebody else is going to feel about it and compliance into safety. And if we're not willing to take those moments of change, if we're not willing to be congruent and honest to who we are, it's very easy to settle into a very good life, but an unfulfilling, burnout life and a long-term grind life.

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

And you've talked about it in dentistry and my industry and the therapeutic and psychological world. 10 years is about all a therapist has before they burnout because they fell into the day to day grind and they're no longer aspiring to anything else. And they get into it, they duck their head, they go to work, they do their thing and they come home and it's unfulfilling. But that's where we end up when we start seeking safety and what we think is security over our individual desire and growth and we forget about our dreams and what it is that we want.

David Phelps: I could go down some pretty deep rabbit holes from a political philosophy which we will avoid today but let me read another quote, which also leads into something you posted on your Facebook profile in the last couple months, but here's a quote. This is from Benjamin Franklin. "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." It's really what is happening a lot today and your post, which falls right into this back in July, was this, "true freedom is not the absence of risk, but the acceptance of risk in the face of self-directed will." Talk a little bit about... That just resonated so much with me, Brett. It was just so timely. So talk about that a little bit.

Brett Judd: True freedom is not the options of risk. I think that that's one of the most important things that we have to wrap our head around and accept in order to be free and to live a free life. Whether we're talking about societally or independently in my own home, I have to accept that there are going to be risks, that there are going to be potential moments when things just don't work. And the minute that I accept that, I'm actually freed of an amazing amount of burden and I'm now able to go forward with this self-directed will. If I've accepted that risk is going to happen, if I've accepted the fact that if I try this, I may fail and I

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

take on this kind of, and I've talking about this some years ago I was really on this, is kind of an "I don't care" attitude.

And it frees us. I don't care if it goes sideways, I don't care if I fail at this, I want this and I know that I can do everything I can to try to achieve it. But when we are constrained, when we're so afraid of the failure, I use the term a lot "into the weeds", and we're so afraid we're going to go in the weeds that we don't even try. This idea with the whole Apex Effect and my love for driving, and you talked about your love for skiing and I've skied since I was two, I understand. When you come into a corner and you don't come off the gas, or you don't break that slalom ski and slow down, there's risk. Am I going to slide out? Am I going to end up off the corner? Am I going to miss this? But if you don't take that risk, you miss that amazing, exhilarating moment when you hit the peak of that corner and you come out with so much speed, so much energy that you actually gain speed because of the corner. It's beautiful.

David Phelps: Yes, it's the acceleration. You come out, the acceleration, it pushes you forward. But to your point, it is a bit scary to it to hit that, to be moving towards that apex, because you don't want to red line it to the point where you actually are going to roll a car or roll yourself. If you're on speed, you don't want to roll yourself. But staying safe, protected, okay. You break, you pull off the gas is really going back to your point of not accepting any risk at all. So I'm going to just be super safe. I don't want to risk anything where I am in my life right now. Am I fulfilled? No, no. I'm probably headed towards burnout, but at least I feel safe. At least I feel like I can live to fight another day.

And for most of us it's like, well, we want to provide stability for our families. Okay, great. Yes, we absolutely have to do that. That is a number one objective in life, but if we're not fulfilled,

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

Brett, ourselves, self-fulfillment, then how good can we be for the people we really want to be good for? Whether, again, probably starting with our family and then we may have customers, clients, patients, community, we may be serving in public hub. How good can we be if we're not personally self-fulfilled? What is that limit to-

Brett Judd: Not at all, not at all. You touch it beautifully in your book when you start talking about Maslow and self-actualization. If we are not doing things in our life that move us into that self-actualized... I'm doing this because I desire this because it's something that moves me because it feeds me in some way. And therefore I'm energized to feed other people. And very few people reach that point because most of us stay in that, "I'm doing everything I can to have security and safety and to meet the grind. Man, if I get to go on a vacation this year, that's a bonus". But that's not living.

And so when we free ourselves from that supposed free... security, and we begin to push it just a little bit, we begin to test, how much can I push into this? How much can I stress this? And where are my limits? That's when our limits grow and that's when we actually begin to expand is when we get into that self-actualized moment and we use that self-directed will. All of a sudden, we realize I have more potential than I thought I did. I have more grip and I have more strength than I thought I did and we're able to hit the next one and the next one with more excitement. But if we stay stuck and we remain in that safe place, we'll never experience or know exactly where our limit is.

David Phelps: Do you find, Brett, that people that you've had the opportunity to work with, who have either during times that you were working with them personally, or maybe it was prior in their life, had gone through some deep, deep setbacks or, I

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

hate to use the word failure, but setbacks in life. Things didn't work out, whether it was... Sometimes it's based on poor decisions that we make and sometimes it's out of outside of our control, like a health issue, a family member may become sick or cancer or car accident, things that we have no control over.

Do you find that people who have gone through a difficult time and through their efforts, working with good people that have coached, mentored them, counsel them through it and gotten to the other side where they're back in a place where there is some relative stability. Do those people live life from that point on, you think, with a better mindset than those who have been somehow keeping themselves back from issues or haven't faced issues yet. What's the difference in mindset for people that have gone through and I'd say, successfully gotten through, there's always changes that happen to us when we go through that. But what do you say, what's your experience there?

Brett Judd: I think it depends so much on the individual and the level of work that they do. It's possible to go through one of these turbulent moments and just do enough work to write yourself, to then get back in the rut. But if we really take that opportunity to look at how did I get this rut anyway, and is that the rut that I want to be in, or is this turbulence and upheaval I'm going through right now an opportunity to change? Those people who take that opportunity and really grab hold of it, they're the ones who come out on the other side, who are resilient, they learn the strength that they have, and they've expanded that strength that they have because they were willing to take the time, not to just write where they were, but actually look at what are the things that got me here? What are the beliefs that I've held onto that are holding me stuck? And what do I need to believe in instead to get me to where I want to go?

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

Now that's a total different amount of work than just, how do I right this ship because it's topsy a little bit and I need to get back centered. We can do both works, but the people who are willing to invest that time, you talk about investing in yourself, who are willing to invest in themselves enough to deep dive, they come out more resilient, more powerful, and more successful in the long run because of that time they spent. So it depends. It depends on the opportunity that the individual takes.

David Phelps: Brett, I probably speak for a lot of people like us, people we have the fortune to work with, in that I was brought up in a world where responsibility, self responsibility, that rugged individualist. If you don't do it, no one's going to do it for you, which is, I'm not saying that's a bad ethic, not a bad character at all, responsibility is very important in our lives. But I was brought up to the point where I believed that everything was on me. And just to be very and vulnerable here along the lines that you were just talking about, one of a number of setbacks or failures that I had in my life was when I went to sell my dental practice the first time, when I made that decision, when my daughter was so sick and I decided, okay, I got to change.

So I was motivated to sell, and I won't go through the whole story, but let's just say this, my first sale, which I carried back financing and paper, it failed. It failed pretty badly and I was in a dark place and I was went through all the emotions. As you know, first I was angry, upset, I'm a victim, somebody did me wrong. And then of course you have to come back around and go, well, what did I do wrong here? Long story short, long story short, deep dive. But to your point, rather than just right the ship, meaning would it had been easy... Well, not easy. Nothing's easy. First inclination would be okay, I have to take this practice back. I thought I was out. Now I, David Phelps, has

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

to go back in and do what I used to do. Be the dentist, put on the scrubs, go do the work I could have made that decision and that would be like righting the ship. Now I'm right back where I was.

Brett Judd: Absolutely, absolutely.

David Phelps: Or the opportunity of going through this was to, "gee, I'm already in a kind of like a not great place. Why don't I take a different path here? Maybe I try something different." So now, I will also say this, I didn't do it by myself. Good clue, David Phelps because I was always the one, I'll do this by myself. No, I brought in some other people that were really good with young doctors. My point is, rather than going back and suiting up and doing the work myself, I brought in one, two, three different associates, but I also got help in guiding those young doctors because I didn't have the time. Didn't really have the wherewithal where I wanted to put it in there. So I got extra help and changed the model so that I wasn't doing the work.

And then it took another two years to sell it a second time, but now it sold the second time for cash and now I'm done. The lessons I learned there were immense. Immense lessons and bottom line is, today, I am not afraid of disruption or turbulence. It's not fun, I don't seek it, but I'm not afraid of it because I know the opportunity there with the turbulence, the opportunity for change. And that's what we're talking about here, the Apex Effect, the change opportunity. It's right in front of us if we'll go through it with a different perspective.

Brett Judd: Yeah. I think a lot of the... One of the biggest things that throws us off is our mindset going into those opportunities. And I do think change moments are opportunities if we take them as such, but we have to have had the mental mindset, before we get into it, of what I plan to do. There's a corner that I love to

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

take on my drive home every night. It's a hard left hand, 90 degree sweeping corner. I love it. The sign says 25 miles an hour. I may or may not have gone faster than that a few times. And my goal is to see, how can I prep myself? How can I prepare myself going into that corner to stay inside my lane? I never crossed the double yellow, that's my whole objective, but I want to do it as fast and as perfect as possible so that I come out on the other end and it's this thrill, but it all comes down to the setup.

If I'm worried about the gravel on the side and I'm staring at it, then I miss it. If I'm not looking through the corner, I mean, so many little things. And so, so much of this is about our mindset and our preparation before the event even happens. Am I ready and what is it that's holding me back if an opportunity comes? And I've thought many times about one of the first times that I was with you at Freedom Founders, and there was this great guy, and I remember talking to him off the side after you had him up in the hot seat. And he was so stuck... In my head, I call him Steve. I don't remember what his name was, but he was in a practice that he desperately needed to get out of, but he didn't see a way to get out and he couldn't wrap his head around the fact that he would be better off getting out of this practice and moving forward into something free of that Albatross that was holding him down.

And he was so fixated on, this is what I do, and this is the safety, and this is what I have to do, that it was killing him. And I remember you were talking with him, you looked at me and said, "Brett, can you offer anything?" And my heart was just aching for this guy, because you could see him on that stool, just dying as he's talking about "I'm trapped". But the worst thing was he wasn't willing to look at any other option.

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

And that is one of the saddest commentaries, I think on anybody's life, is when we are so stuck that we don't feel like we can look at any other option and that's, if we can get there... that's, that's part of that pre-planning that's before that opportunity even comes to, "now I'm trapped and I'm scared, and I'm in the turmoil." You got to be thinking about this early, early on and ready for that opportunity. And that's just a matter of mindset shift, and opening up that perspective so that we're ready for the change moment. So that when you come along and you offer them this incredible opportunity to find freedom, they're like, "yeah, this is great, sign me up" because they had prepared themselves prior to being presented with the change moment. And there's a lot of work that has to happen in the background for that to happen. So we're free to do that.

David Phelps: So the problem I see and know from experiences for people that are highly educated, this is not training that we receive. The training we receive, right, as you well know is you go through training to develop expertise, in this case, clinical expertise to treat other people, their body, their mouth, their mind, you have license, you have credentials and you're trained to do that well. So the whole focus is on one's technical capabilities in the field. Now, those are important, absolutely. If you're going to help people, you've got to have, you've got to have the as capabilities, but you're talking about different type of mindsets. You're talking about a mindset that is looking at a much bigger picture horizon. Let's take the technical stuff that we're talking about right here, I'll just put it in my hands here, and we're just going to put it off to the side and say, "it's not unimportant, but let's just say it's there."

Now, what you're talking about, the mindset. Where do we get that? I know. You know the answer, I know the answer, but we're talking to an audience here and I've got a lot of young

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

people that are very driven, hardworking, they've got the capabilities, they've got these clinicals skills, but I think their focus is still on this little box over here. How can we speak to them and say, "Hey, great, great, great job, great job. That's awesome." But what else should they be doing to develop the mindset we're talking about?

Brett Judd: Yeah. I think a lot of it has to do with the title of your book, What's Next. I love "what if". Learn your technical skill, be brilliant at your technical skill and master it so that you can get established in every way you can, but you have to always be looking at what's coming next and what is the next opportunity so that I'm ready when that comes. One of the very first times you and I met, I was in my very first practice, it wasn't going well, we had made an investment in a product that was just drowning us. You and Dr. Chandler George both looked at me and Gina said, "you got to shut your practice down." And I was like the guy sitting on the stool on the hot seat. I couldn't see it, I couldn't do it.

I held onto it for another year. And it killed us for the moment. What it did though, is it expanded my opportunity because I wasn't so fixated on "this is what I do", that I couldn't look at it and say, "okay, well now what do I do? How do I take these skills and these resources and the knowledge that I have and reapply it into something that will work" because that one didn't work. If we don't have that mindset though, and we haven't started from the beginning, and I would say this to your young dentists, my brother-in-law, that's a dentist that I've sent over to you a couple of times, "look, you got to go with David", I've talk to him over and over about what's next after this. You're great at what you do, what are you going to do next?

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

Because from the beginning, we have to be looking at the exit strategy, otherwise what we're doing is we're just sitting in the middle of the road and we hit those corners and we just go around because the speed limit signs at 25 miles an hour on this corner so that's what I do and the next thing we know, we're 60, 70 years old and we haven't done anything, but the same thing over and over and now we're told we have to retire, but what did I do? I didn't do anything. So that mindset comes in the very, very big beginning. Get your skills, hone your craft, be brilliant at what you do in anticipation of the next great opportunity and be willing to grab it when it comes.

David Phelps: My biggest stretches, Brett, have come from, I just talked about where we met, in a Mastermind group where we're not focused on a technical specialty of a craft or a trade, we're focused on this bigger picture. And in a really strong, well-facilitated group like that where we have trust in the group that we're not being judged, but same token, people will... we're open to having people tell us what they really see. We need that outside perspective. We need some people with love and caring, no agenda to say, "hey, Brett and Gina or David, why are you doing"... I mean, just asking the question, why? Back to clarity? Why? Because sometimes we don't ask ourselves that question, do we? We don't really get it down. We need other people that we can trust to ask these questions, to give us the clarity, make that change that we're unwilling, we're stuck not willing to change because everybody else says, "oh no, you wear this hat. This is how you do it. If you go left or right from that, there's something wrong with you." Back to the comparison of-

Brett Judd: One of the worst things I see with that all the time, I see it all the time. "What do you mean? Our family has always been a lawyer. You're going to be a lawyer. How can you... You want to

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

be a school teacher? Why would you do that? I don't understand that. We've always been lawyers." And so there's this generational trap that happens and, terrible way to say it, but I see it all the time with entrepreneurs, especially with the men. "We have daddy issues. This is what my dad did. These are the things that my dad said to me. These are the things that dad taught me." Great. Maybe he was wrong or maybe it worked when he did it, but 30, 40 years later, does it work today? And do we have to shift that? And we have to get over those. And that takes some very deep introspective work and it's work that is difficult, but it's vital. And if we don't, then we're stuck.

David Phelps: Every time we talk, Brett, I keep coming with more. It's like, "okay, we could keep doing this for several hours." I'm going to finish with one other quick point because it's just a mine right now. Going back to, in my case, it's younger dentist, but we could say it's anybody younger that is in school, going to school and, we know today, piling up relatively immense amounts of debt. I don't care what school. Dentistry, it's a lot, but it's a lot everywhere. It's all relative to when we were going to school.

Brett Judd: All relative to what you're going to end up making on the other end. I mean, it all seems-

David Phelps: Good point. And so what, and I think, why are so many young people, in this case, in dentistry, going down this route where they're coming out with with major six figures of debt. I mean, 250, 350, 500,000 is not unreasonable amount of debt coming out of school. Why are they doing that-

Brett Judd: Well, it is unreasonable, but it's not-

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

David Phelps: Yeah, it's kind of normalized, but no, it's, it's very unreasonable.

Brett Judd: I understand what you're saying. I understand.

David Phelps: To your point is why are they doing this? Well, it's because either mom, or your daddy, or grandfather, or in school, I was anointed as being smart in the sciences or whatever and this is your road. And they're not having the opportunity to look left or right, to say, "gee, have things changed." Maybe the professions was a great place to be 30 or 40 years ago, but it's different. Now, I'm not trying to tell people not to go there if that's your interest because if anything you love and have passion for, then yeah, you should go do it and you'll figure out a way.

Brett Judd: Absolutely right. Absolutely right.

David Phelps: But just a robotic. Follow the leader because in the past being a doctor or a CPA or lawyer, have these state profession of respect is supposed to be the end all. Well maybe, decades ago, it was for the right people, but today there's a lot of choices, but people are... they're seeking safety, back to safety. Well, that's safe, That's safe. But are you going to be fulfilled there? Well, you better test drive that before you decide, that would be my point. We need good doctors and professionals. We need them. Hopefully the educational system will change with supply and demand but anyway, I don't want to dig too deep on that. I just thought was such a big point you made earlier about the reasons why people do what they do.

Brett Judd: Well, I think that's a really great point too, that we have to look at the things that we've... we have to look at the people that are giving us the knowledge and love them and be grateful for it but then question it. We also have to look at the knowledge itself

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

and where is it coming from, and is it outdated, does it fit with what I want? I love that Mike Rowe is out there pushing the trades because for so many, many years, it has been, "you got to get a college education, you got to get a college education." And so what do people do? They go in and the colleges have figured out, "hey maybe we can get ton, ton of money here" and they've done it.

And now nobody goes into the trades because, for some reason, we're supposed to get a college education. What is it that you want to do and what is it that serves you? I've got a niece, who's a welder and she's loving life. She's up in Alaska, she's welding, she's brilliant at it and she's just having a time of her life. She got a certification training and, bam, she's off and she's making great money. So we have to rethink the beliefs that have been poured onto us and these truths that have been shoved into us. And if they don't work, don't do it.

David Phelps: That's right. That's right. Well, Brett, it's been so great to have a conversation with you. I love it every time we get a chance, we're going to need to do more of these, but thanks for lending your perspective with a lot of experience as an entrepreneur yourself, you've lived these ups and downs yourself, and then you've helped so many people do it. It's, it's just great to get someone who's authentic that can actually really talk about it from real life and not just theory.

Brett Judd: Well, it's always a pleasure to talk with you and to be here, Dave. What you do is just inspiring to me and the way that you've found your group and you're helping them find freedom. I just love it. And I think it's something that every one of us need to be able to do and just to have that free life is what we're here for. That's what we ought be doing.

[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps

Ep #346: Brett Judd - Balancing Life, Business, and Success

David Phelps: Yes, sir. So Brett Judd, you can find Brett just with a direct contact if you care to follow up and discuss with him, maybe some thoughts that you have. Brett, B-R-E-T-T, at theapexeffect.com. Thank you, Brett.

Brett Judd: Thank you, David.

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